Faith and Inspiration

Jokes Between Friends

It was an apocalyptically quiet day. Tumbleweeds crossed the pavement and little Ian stood on the porch, staring out the screen door with the silent profundity that accompanies a child lost in his thoughts.

My sister played her Nintendo DS, I worked at my computer; we thought nothing of our little brother's mute contemplations, nor of our older brother's soft tread to slink onto the porch.

Luke Marshburn
Homestead Mennonite Church

When Miles locked his arms around Ian in a bear hug, we ignored it; when he shouted that zombies were coming to eat Ian's brain, we quirked smiles, maybe, but kept our eyes on our own screens.

But when Ian with all his childhood might burst from his brother's bonds, when he flushed in triumph and whirled with a pithy one-liner rising to his mind and confidently said, "What brain?" …Well, that was too good to pass up. We stared at him, cheeks pinching, brows high. He stared back, and when the realization dawned on his face, our snickers flew. Nope, no zombie would want Ian. Bad zombie-bait there, he'll survive the apocalypse, no doubt. We've yet to let him live down that little slip-up, teasing him with a wink and a "What brain?" every now and again.

My siblings and I are a bunch of clowns. We enjoy the joy of laughter and bring a silly touch to just about any situation, intentionally or not. We're not above ribbing family and friends or making jokes at their expense.

Perhaps sacrilegiously, these ribbings even extend to our Christianity, making jokes at God's expense. Sometimes that means I'll cross myself out of context; or maybe I cleanse someone with a few sprinkles of "holy water" from my water bottle; or when performing the ritual of communion I might grab the nearest chocolate chip cookie and declare it the needed flesh of Jesus; or I'll sing praise music in a thick southern accent, or a posh British accent, or so deep that my bones rumble, aiming more for eccentric performance entertainment than as worship. I call it my "irreverence," how I fail to treat God with the pious sanctity he deserves.

He does deserve my respect. He is the king. He's the father. He's the righteous one who was willing to sacrifice Godhood to heal the rift formed between him and us, a saviour who deserves nothing less than reverence.

But God is not a one-dimensional being, and I believe our relationship with him should be more complex than one set of emotions and actions. God is also our friend. He's our brother. If you can't laugh with God, with whom can you laugh? I don't think he minds when I poke fun at Christian rituals, or when I bring out the layers of life's absurdity when I bass-drop my way through "Fairest Lord Jesus," brows bouncing and a wink at the ready. I believe that God winks back, friend enough to let me tease him and his admittedly glorious majesty. God's my friend and a person as much as anyone else; he can enjoy the joy of laughter as much as we do, and best of all, his ego isn't fragile. He can take a little gentle ribbing when I play with the tropes of my faith. Though he also has no faults—I doubt I'll ever get one of those "What brain?" moments about him. I'm sure he has plenty about me though!

OBITUARY

Michael Lee Brawner

Michael Lee Brawner, of Homestead, passed away June 23rd, of natural causes.

Born June 23rd, in Arlington Virginia, the second child of Lloyd and Rita Brawner.

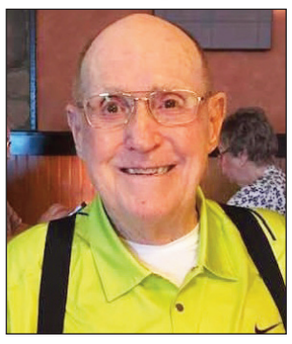
Mike's schooling ended at age 15 after suffering a tragic accident and spending more than five months in the hospital. His love of life was reflected in his ambulance ride to the hospital. The attendant tried to pull the sheet over him thinking he had passed. Mike pushed the sheet back stating, "Not yet."

A life of pain was tolerated by his love of the Lord.

He is survived by his brother Jeff. He was predeceased by his parents Lloyd and Rita, brothers Patrick, Steve, Jon and sister Joan.

There will be a family gathering at a later date in DeLand, Florida.

Jesse A. Young



Jesse A. Young, 88, died July 7th, 2022 at home in Lady Lake, Florida (formerly of Homestead).

Jesse is survived by Julia, his wife of 52 years, 6 children, 13 grandchildren, 20 great grandchildren, 2 great-great grandchildren, 2 brothers and 1 cousin.

Jesse owned and operated Jesse Young Automotive in Homestead for 30 years.

Playful Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom

By Danna Acevedo

There is a predominant belief that learning is best when teacher directed. However, research has shown that playful learning, when combined with a rich curriculum, promotes children's development, and reinforces the curiosity for learning. There are numerous ways in which play and learning mutually support one another and how a teacher can connect learning goals to children's play. In all its forms, play is a practice that starts with maximizing children's choice, their wonder, and enthusiasm for learning.

Play in early childhood settings has often been misunderstood. The belief that children need to get an early start with reading and math has led to teacher-directed classrooms, with more time for pencil-and-paper tasks. This has led to increased stress on educators and families, with many children developing anxiety, hyperactivity, and lack of focus. For children to develop skills such as attention, impulse control, and memory, they need to be immersed in developmentally appropriate practice and curricular learning that is relevant. Playful learning is a way to do this.

Playful learning is done in a context in which children learn content while doing "free play" or "self-directed play" with some teacher guidance ("guided play"). By starting with children's curiosity to experiment, explore, and problem solve, learning becomes more interactive. Instead of seeing children as having an "empty" mind that needs to be filled with information, children are seen as explorers who bring some prior knowledge to the experience but can construct an understanding in the process.

Learning that is active, engaging, meaningful, and socially interactive leads to more thinking and increased learning. Playful learning then is a form of guided play, where the teacher builds in the learning and maintains the intentional component to the activity. Research has shown that with playful learning children develop more vocabulary and spatial skills. And when topics are important and culturally relevant to children, they can better identify with the subject and the learning becomes more complete.

Guided Play

There are many types of play. These include free play (or self-directed play), guided play, games, playful instruction, and direct instruction.

All have the following three variables that determine to what degree it is play: the level of adult involvement; the extent to which the child is directing the learning; and the learning goal. Understanding how children develop and learn, awareness of social and cultural contexts, and considering the individual child combine to provide the teacher the tools to think strategically how to target guided play.

Guided play allows teachers to focus children's play on specific learning goals (e.g., standards-based goals), which can be applied to a variety of topics, from learning place value in math to identifying rhyming words in literacy activities. Note, however, that the teacher does not take over the play activity or even direct it. Instead, she asks probing questions that guide the next level of child-directed exploration. This is a perfect example of how a teacher can initiate a context for learning while still leaving the child in charge.

The goal for Early Childhood educators is to create activities that allow children to play their way. Starting with the children's interests and getting them involved in playful learning activities will not only be more engaging, but the children will be having fun in the process. And educators will also have fun teaching the children new skills and expanding their understanding.

Answering Your Social Security Questions

Securing today and tomorrow

Question:
I am not sure if I am ready to retire? Can I still apply for medicare online?
X. Osorio, Weston
Answer:
Yes, you can apply for Medicare online even if you are not ready to retire. And it takes less than 10 minutes! There are no forms to sign and usually no required documentation. We'll process your application and contact you if we need more information. To apply for Medicare and find other important information, visit www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare.

If you want to start receiving Medicare at age 65, you must apply for Medicare no earlier than three months before your 65th birthday and no later than three months after that birthday. We refer to this window of opportunity to apply for Medicare as your initial enrollment period. Some Medicare beneficiaries may qualify for Extra Help to pay for the monthly premiums, annual deductibles, and co-payments related to the Medicare Prescription Drug program. You must be receiving Medicare, have limited resources and income, and reside in one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia to qualify for the Extra Help. For more information on Extra Help, visit www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare/prescriptionhelp.

Question:
How can I get a Social Security Statement?
N. Allen, South Miami
Answer:
You can get your Social Security Statement (Statement) online by using your personal my Social Security account. If you don't yet have an account, you can easily create one. Your online Statement gives you secure and convenient access to estimates for retirement, disability, and survivors benefits you and your family may be eligible for. It also shows your earnings history.

To set up or use your account to get your Statement, go to Sign In Or Create An Account.

We also mail paper Statements to workers age 60 and older 3 months before their birthday if they don't receive Social Security benefits and don't yet have a personal my Social Security account. Workers who don't want to wait for their scheduled mailing can request their Statement by following these instructions. The Statement will arrive by mail in four to six weeks.

Question:
What is the eligibility for Social Security spouse's benefits and my own retirement benefits?
C. Moran, Sunrise
Answer:
If you have not worked or do not have enough Social Security credits to qualify for your own Social Security benefits, you may be able to receive spouse's benefits. To qualify for spouse's benefits, you must be one of these:

- At least 62 years of age.
- Any age and caring for a child entitled to receive benefits on your spouse's record and who is younger than age 16 or disabled. Your full spouse's benefit could be up to one-half the amount your spouse is entitled to receive at their full retirement age. If you choose to begin receiving spouse's benefits before you reach full retirement age, your benefit amount will be permanently reduced.

You will receive your full spouse's benefit amount if you wait until you reach full retirement age to begin receiving benefits. You will also receive the full amount if you are caring for a child entitled to receive benefits on your spouse's record who is younger than age 16 or disabled.

Question:
How do I schedule, reschedule, or cancel an appointment?
A. Quade, Coral Gables
Answer:
You do not need to wait for an appointment to file for benefits or appeal a disability decision. You can file for the following benefits online:

- Retirement.
- Medicare.
- Spouses.
- Disability.

If you do not want to apply for benefits online, or you need to speak to us for any other reason, you can schedule, reschedule or cancel an appointment by:

- Calling us at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778) between 8:00 am – 7:00 pm, Monday through Friday
- Contacting your local Social Security office.

To submit an obituary or death notice, email wording and jpg photo to info@newsleadermail.com, 305-245-2311
Print deadline is Wednesday at noon.

Temple Hatikvah
Homestead Jewish Center
A Reform Congregation
183 NE 8th St., Homestead
For information please call
305-454-4944
or visit www.thhjc.org

LESLI BURKHEAD
305-282-9603
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Market is Hot!
FOR THE BEST RESULTS STAY WITH THE BEST!!